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Local News

Truck convoy: Protesters remove fencing from War Memorial; OPS waits for reinforcements, 26 criminal arrests lodged so far

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Anti-vaccine mandate protests continue in downtown Ottawa. Veterans and supporters removed the fencing that had surrounded the National War Memorial. Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022. PHOTO BY ERROL MCGIHON /POSTMEDIA

The “Freedom Convoy” that converged in Ottawa on Jan. 28 began in response to the federal government’s move to require that Canadian truck drivers crossing the U.S. border be fully vaccinated, but has evolved into a protest of all public health measures aimed at fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizers say they will not end their protest until all measures are dropped.

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READ OUR UPDATING COVERAGE FROM SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13.

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What you need to know

- Ottawa Police Service announces that it, the Ontario Provincial Police and the RCMP have established an enhanced “Integrated Command Centre” to deal with the influx of demonstrators
- Two downtown grocery stores closed early Saturday due to maskless crowds, according to reports
- Protesters remove protective fencing from War Memorial
- Police have lodged 26 criminal charges, more than 2,600 tickets issued by police and bylaw
- Chief Peter Sloly says OPS continues to wait for reinforcements to help control the situation
- Small ‘counter-protest’ at Lansdowne urges ‘make Ottawa boring again’
- Hundreds of people continue to gather to support truck protest on Parliament Hill
- Coun. Jeff Leiper tells Ottawa police residents are looking for action
- Small blockade near Cornwall border crossing
- Windsor police take action to evict protesters from Ambassador Bridge area

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

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The Independent grocery store on Bank Street and Somerset Street also closed early, shutting its doors at 7 p.m. rather than 10 p.m. because of the protesters.

Coun. Catherine McKenney, who represents the downtown ward, said the closures by “thugs” of both grocery stores in the area was a message to anyone who still thinks the occupation is peaceful and that Ottawa has the resources to control it.

Catherine McKenney  (they/them) 
@cmckenney · [Follow](#)



For anyone who still thinks this illegal occupation is 'peaceful' and that we have the 'resources needed' to end/control the occupation we now have both Centretown grocers shutting their doors because they are being swarmed by thugs.

Creeson Agecoutay  @CreesonCTV

The Farm Boy in downtown Ottawa decided to close its doors as the number of protestors grow. The man in the vest says they're closing up because he has young workers inside who feel uneasy. Other businesses choosing to stay open are filling up with people wearing no masks.

The following media includes potentially sensitive content.

View

7:35 PM · Feb 12, 2022



1.3K



[See the latest COVID-19 information on Twitter](#)

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9:35 p.m.

The party around Parliament Hill continued Saturday night, with music, dancing, horn honking and fireworks.

Lorie Paddock, who lives at the corner of Metcalfe and Nepean, said she's fed up and frustrated by the protesters who have invaded her neighbourhood, making noise and refusing to wear masks in the businesses that remain open.

She had just walked by a convenience store on her way home. "There were 40 people in there, not one of them wearing a mask except the kid at the cash."

The Farm Boy on Metcalfe Street where she shops closed early Saturday. When she visited the store in mid-afternoon, Paddock said about a third of the customers didn't have masks and the clerk told her that customers were simply refusing.

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She could hear the horn honking and screaming from her condo.

8:18 p.m.

The Ottawa Police Service announced that, in conjunction with the Ontario Provincial Police and the RCMP, it had established “an enhanced, Integrated Command Centre (ICC) in response to a significant influx of demonstrators into the Ottawa area and escalation of the current occupation.”

A media release from police said more than 4,000 demonstrators were present Saturday, but added that “safety concerns — arising from aggressive, illegal behaviour by many demonstrators — limited police enforcement capabilities.”

The ICC is expected to enhance the ability of Ottawa police to respond to the current situation by making effective use of additional resources provided by policing partners.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The release also said that, due to the volume of people and vehicles in the downtown core, police on Saturday “safely managed” the movement of various convoys around Ottawa, including one 300-vehicle convoy and a 20-kilometre-long car convoy from Quebec. As well, police intercepted a fuel transport bound for the core area.

7:45 p.m.

The main route to the Pacific Highway border crossing to Washington in Surrey, B.C., was closed after

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DriveBC reported that Highway 15 was closed in both directions south of 8th Avenue due to protesters. Heavy congestion was also reported at the junction of Highway 1 and Highway 15.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Protesters were previously blocked at 8 Avenue, leading up to the border crossing, but highway footage from mid-afternoon on showed protesters walking freely toward the crossing along 176 Street.

7 p.m.

A court injunction obtained by the City of Edmonton to address noise from protests against public health restrictions appeared to have little effect as trucks and semis rolled past the provincial legislature for a third straight Saturday.

Close to 700 people also marched along Jasper Avenue in downtown Edmonton, carrying Canadian flags and signs opposing vaccine mandates.

The injunction, which was granted by Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench on Friday, says people who are involved in a protest convoy must refrain from sounding vehicle horns, airhorns or other devices that create unnecessary noise.

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Bethany Madigan, who stood near the legislature as honking vehicles drove by, said she wasn't aware of the injunction, noting she doesn't pay much attention to mainstream media outlets.

Madigan says people have been pushed to the point where they feel "they don't have very much left to lose."

5:45 p.m.

The Royal Canadian Legion also criticized the removal of the protective fence around the National War Memorial by demonstrators on Saturday.

The removal of the fence and "reported inaction by those charged with safeguarding the site was deeply disturbing," the Legion said in a statement released in late afternoon.

Police stood by and watched as dozens of demonstrators tore down the fence before gathering around the monument dedicated to Canada's war dead. The fencing had been put in place the first weekend of the truckers' convoy protest in downtown Ottawa in late January.

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5 p.m.

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Some of the protesters, faced with a line of police officers, left Saturday morning. But in the middle of the afternoon hundreds of people were occupying a stretch of Huron Church Road near the bridge.

Efforts to clear the area surrounding the bridge have hit a standstill, with more adults and children trickling in.

Some people were playing music while others are chanting or honking horns.

Police officers were standing in a line and blocking the entrance to the bridge, with two armoured vehicles and police cruisers behind them.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

4:55 p.m.

The crowds around Parliament Hill swelled on Saturday afternoon and grew so dense that it was difficult to walk on Wellington Street, where the demonstrators have set up a stage with amplifiers, speakers and lights.

Protesters waved Canadian flags, wore them as capes and shook hands with the truck drivers who have sat parked in the downtown core for more than two weeks.

As protesters milled about on Wellington Street in front of Parliament Saturday afternoon, there was a carnival-like atmosphere, with people waving Canadian flags and listening to speakers and bouncy castles once again set up for children.

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A group of demonstrators led by a faction of supporters who identified themselves as military veterans removed metal fencing that had been erected around the National War Memorial after a woman was seen dancing atop it in the initial days of the occupation.

Jake Spinney said he was a veteran who had travelled from Melford, N.S., to participate in the protest. Spinney, who has been living in a vehicle in front of the Supreme Court, scraped ice off the monument on Saturday afternoon and shook hands with dozens of demonstrators who filed past.

“I personally took the first bolts out of this thing,” he said, pointing to a pile of fencing.

“As you can see down there, it’s nicely and neatly stacked and ready for them to come get it. And if they want me to load it up for them, I will because it needs to get out of here.”

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Lawrence MacAulay, the federal minister for veterans affairs, said on social media Saturday that ripping down the fencing at the memorial was “completely unacceptable.”

“Fences were put up to prevent the flagrant desecration and disrespect of our sacred monuments. This behaviour is disappointing and I’m calling on protesters to respect our monuments,” he posted on Twitter.

But Spinney said the barriers had offended him and other veterans who support the protest and they would place a guard by the monument and keep it clean until the occupation ended.

“They have no right to block the monument off from us,” he said, referring to politicians and government bureaucrats, whom he believed were out of touch with the working class.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

“The monument is for our brothers and sisters and everybody else’s relatives. Not for them.”

Spinney echoed a hard line that had been repeated by some of the demonstrators: an absolute unwillingness to leave the city until vaccine mandates fell.

“They have no leverage on me to get shots,” he said. “You’re going to have to come down my dirt road and come get me. But my mother couldn’t watch her grandkids play soccer outside. I watched her half crying because she couldn’t go to bingo with her friends.

“I’m not going home until this is dealt with. They can drag me out of here. I’m not here to fight cops.

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STORY CONTINUES BELOW

But he also expressed a disdain for the country's political structures, where he felt his voice was not heard.

"The conservatives aren't riding this populist wave into power on our back. It's not happening," he said. "I told Maxime Bernier. I told him right over there. Every day at 1 p.m. the veterans meet. Haven't seen him. So he's running out of time with me too."

"Politics is not the solution," said another demonstrator, who did not give his name. "They're just stealing. This is the only way they know, is stealing from the people."

2 p.m.

Demonstrators carried off protective fencing that was erected around the War Memorial earlier in the protest.

Several police officers were shown on social media standing on Elgin Street near the memorial when the fencing was taken down.

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The fencing was put in place last month following a number of incidents on the first weekend of demonstration.

Social media was filled with video showing a person dancing on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Police have asked for public assistance in identifying a woman suspected of desecrating the the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

The acts were widely criticized both by Armed Forces members and the public.

Noon

Ottawa police say they are waiting for reinforcements to help them control the demonstration in downtown Ottawa as protesters on Friday night “exhibited aggressive behaviour” toward police, refused to follow directions and overwhelmed officers.

Demonstrators milled around Wellington Street in front of Parliament Hill on Friday night, where a large stage had been set up, dancing, drinking, honking horns and yelling “freedom.”

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In a statement Saturday morning, Ottawa Police said they are deploying “all available resources to put an

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“We have a plan to end this unlawful occupation and await the necessary reinforcements to do so,” said the statement.

Ottawa police Chief Peter Sloly had said he needs another 1,800 police and civilian officers to end the demonstrations quickly and safely.

As of Friday, it was unclear how many officers, intelligence experts and other staff had been promised or had arrived in the city. Sloly said he has had “constructive discussions” with the RCMP, the OPP and other police services, but declined to give details for operational reasons.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

As of 10:30 a.m. on Saturday Ottawa police said they had made 26 arrests on criminal charges, including two additional arrests for public intoxication and had intercepted a stolen vehicle headed for the occupation, which is the second such vehicle recovered.

Police and bylaw officers have issued more than 2,600 tickets, said the statement.

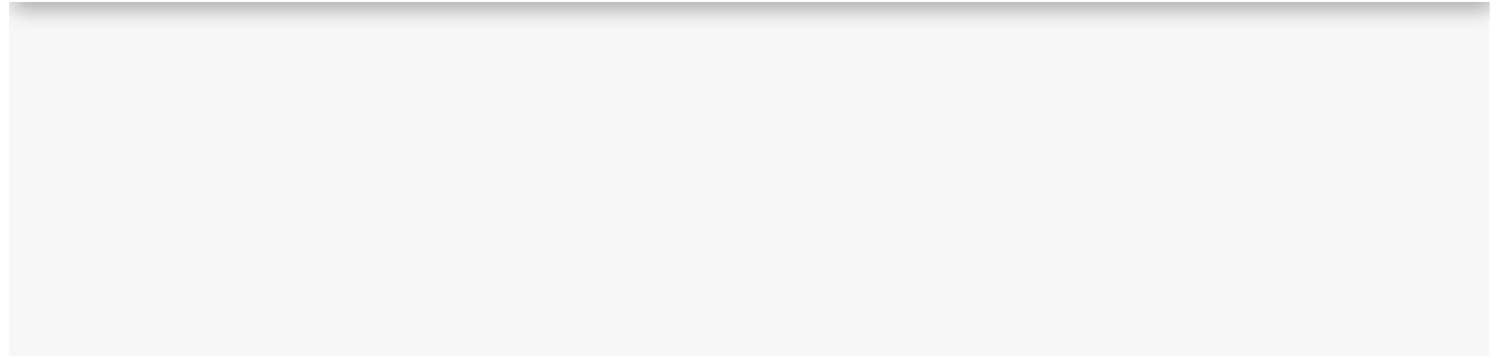
In addition, Ottawa police and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation have launched a joint “truck violation initiative” that has so far involved placing three vehicles out of services and laying 10 charges, including for moving violations, document offences, lapsed inspections and daily log infractions.

Police will start enforcing Ontario’s new emergency orders when they have been formally implemented by the province, said the statement.

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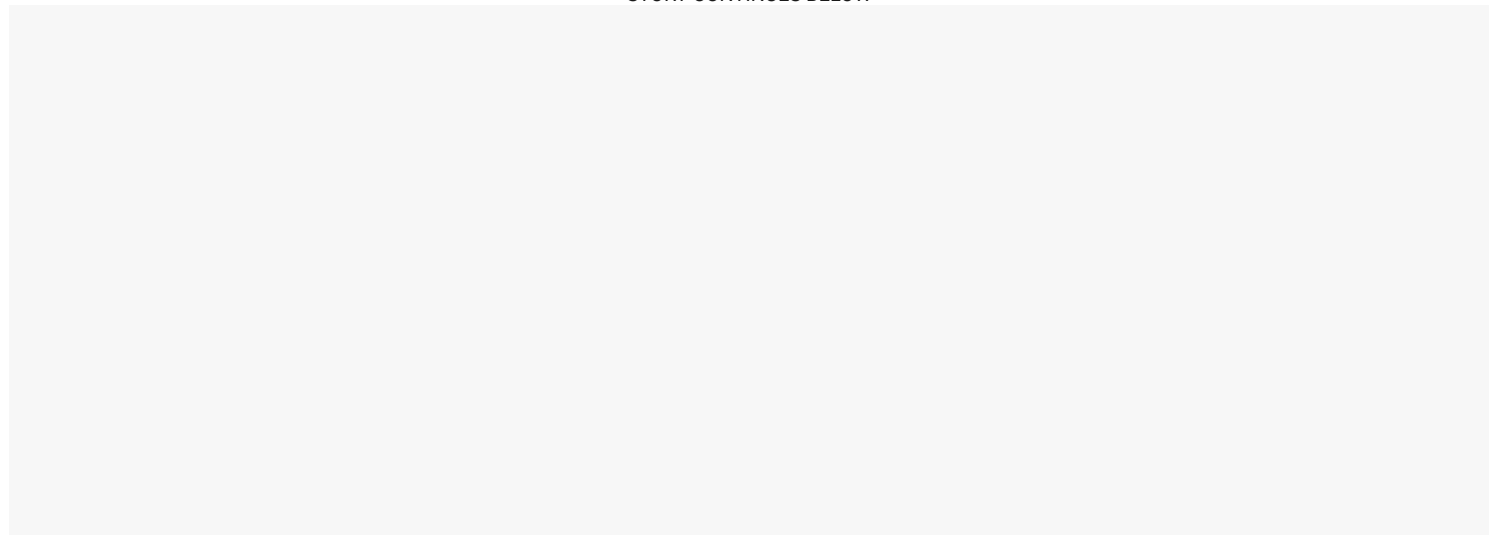
The province said in a statement the emergency measures had received approval from Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell Saturday morning.

The regulations state that people blocking roads, sidewalks and bridges could now face arrest and fines of \$100,000 or jail time.

It's now a crime to impede access to a highway, street, walkway or bridge if doing so prevents the delivery of essential goods and services; severely disrupts "ordinary economic activity"; or causes serious interference with the safety, health or well-being of members of the public.

It's also illegal to impede access to "critical infrastructure," which includes 400-series highways, airports, canals, hospitals, utility infrastructure such as water, gas, sanitation and communications, international and interprovincial bridges and crossings, railways, power generation and transmission facilities, ports, and places where COVID-19 vaccines are administered.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW



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Police can also ask people to disperse and remove any objects used to commit the offences, including vehicles.

The regulation also contains provisions that allow people to have their driver's licence or Commercial Vehicle Operators' Registration or plate portion of their permit cancelled or suspended.

Ontario announced Friday that it was declaring a state of emergency to allow for regulations to help control the demonstrations against COVID-19 public health measures and mandatory vaccination.

Under the state of emergency announced Friday, police will be able to arrest people who block roads and sidewalks, with fines of up to \$100,000 and jail time.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The OPS statement said officers were also deployed to downtown schools on Friday in response to reports of demonstrators harassing children.

On Twitter, Capital Ward Coun. Shawn Menard asked rhetorically when Ottawa residents will stop being lied to by authorities.

"We are hearing over and over again that enforcement is taking place but that is clearly, and verifiably, a lie," he said Saturday.

Menard raised a series of questions, asking whether police leaders are, in fact, giving clear orders to enforce the law in downtown Ottawa? Whether the lack of meaningful action is strictly a resource issue?

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Start demanding the truth.”

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

11:45 a.m.

A small contingent of counter-protesters gathered at Lansdowne Park on Saturday morning with signs that read, “Truck Off,” and “Make Ottawa Boring Again.”

Clayton Goodwin, a military veteran, said he wants the government to act against the protesters occupying downtown Ottawa. “We’ve lost our trust in our institutions, our police force,” he said. “Those that would use children as human shields and turn our flag upside down, torture our neighbours with noise, you can’t engage them. You have to act against them.”

Goodwin called the anti-vaccine mandate protest “a gift.”

“It’s a fantasy: they’re liberating our city from nothing. We have 92 per cent of the population vaccinated, and we’re waiting to open up so we can support our businesses,” he said.

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Another protester who identified herself only as Jenna said she lives downtown and wants her neighbourhood returned to residents. She said she has been harassed for wearing a mask and doesn't know what she'll face when she goes outside her door.

"It's so unbelievably frustrating and exhausting," she said. "I'd like to see the police do the things they say they're going to do: If they say they're going to stop fuel, then they should actually stop fuel from getting in."

"Even if they say they're going to do something new now, I don't trust them to do it."

Michael Hay, 38, of Ottawa, said the protesters occupying downtown Ottawa have engaged in "psychological warfare" to intimidate and harass city residents with noise, trucks and implied violence.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

"That extremist element needs to be gone," he said. "If they just returned to peaceful protest, I feel like we could hash this out: I know some of them have legitimate grievances."

Hay said the protesters are so dug in that the Ottawa police will need a lot of help to evict them: "I don't want it to come to extreme action, I really don't."

Zak Klaas, a civil servant, said he joined Saturday morning's counter protest to show that "more people are opposed to the values of the convoy than are supporting it."

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Clayton Goodwin was one of the counter- protesters out Saturday to object to 'Freedom Convoy' protesters PHOTO BY ASHLEY FRASER /Postmedia

11:30 a.m.

People's Party of Canada Leader Maxime Bernier plans to start Saturday at a trucker's rally in Montreal before joining up with a convoy to attend the demonstration in Ottawa.

Maxime Bernier 

@MaximeBernier · [Follow](#)



This morning I will be at a protest march in Jarry park, Montreal. I will then head for Ottawa with a convoy and take part in the [#TruckersForFreedom](#) rally there. Join us

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11 a.m.

A group of farm tractors and other vehicles is slowing access to the City of Cornwall coming out of the Canada-U.S. port of entry.

The vehicles, led by some of the same people who organized a convoy from Alexandria to Ottawa on Feb. 5, started blocking lanes at the intersection of Water Street and Brookdale Avenue Saturday morning.

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A driver from New York state makes his way through the protest at Brookdale Avenue and Water Street on Saturday, in Cornwall, Ont. PHOTO BY TODD HAMBLETON /POSTMEDIA

10 a.m.

Coun. Jeff Leiper said Saturday he saw reports of the bandstand set-up Friday night in downtown Ottawa and, like many city residents, felt both anger and disbelief. He said the so-called “red zone” has become more welcoming to occupiers rather than less during the past two weeks, and he called on police to act.

“Close the down the fun fair,” he implored on Twitter.

“They certainly are acting with impunity,” he said in an interview Saturday, “and it can only be taken by residents as impunity. I don’t know if it’s a deliberate provocation, but it certainly has been taken that

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Leiper said police have not shared with city councillors the intelligence that is guiding their permissive approach to the now two-week old occupation. It means, he said, that frustration and impatience among residents only mounts when they don't understand the inaction of police – particularly in a city that once cracked down on a child's lemonade stand.

“The occupiers are potentially dangerous in ways in which those who build a lemonade stand are not so police have to take a different approach,” he said. “But we are at wit's end and we're looking for action.”

9:30 a.m.

Police in Windsor, Ont. say they've begun enforcement actions against protesters opposed to COVID-19 restrictions who blocked access to the Ambassador Bridge for days.

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But others are still on hand, either in trucks or on foot, carrying Canadian flags and occasionally shouting “freedom.”

Police are maintaining a heavy presence at the entrance to the bridge, a key border crossing between Canada and the U.S. where protesters brought traffic to a standstill for most of the week.

Two RCMP armoured vehicles are on the scene and some RCMP officers carrying guns are on standby.

The Ontario Superior Court issued an injunction against the protest last night, giving participants until 7 p.m. to clear out. That deadline was largely ignored.

9 a.m.

In Ottawa early Saturday, after a raucous Parliament Hill party Friday night at Wellington and Sussex, protesters gave no indication they intended to leave under the threat of harsh fines and other measures under the emergency orders issued by Premier Doug Ford in Friday.

Nor was there any sign the groups blockading Windsor’s Ambassador Bridge, intend to leave soon.

In fact, Ottawa police Chief Peter Sloly said the most recent intelligence indicated the city could expect a demonstration this weekend similar to what it saw last weekend, ie., about 1,000 trucks and vehicles and 5,000 demonstrators.

Community groups and labour associations are to meet and demonstrate against the occupation, with a pair of protests scheduled to begin at about noon.

The provincial government declared a state of emergency that will provide for \$100,000 fines and up to one year in jail as punishments against people who continue to illegally block roads, bridges, walkways and other critical infrastructure.

Both Ford and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau warned the protesters, who are demanding an immediate end to all COVID-19 public health mandates and restrictions, that if they don’t go home the sanctions they face could ruin their lives.

Friday night, an Ontario court granted an injunction preventing protesters from blocking the Ambassador Bridge border crossing in Windsor. The injunction took effect at 7 p.m.

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Police officers stand guard on a street as truckers and supporters continue blocking access to the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit and Windsor, in protest against coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine mandates, in Windsor, Ontario, Canada February 12, 2022. PHOTO BY CARLOS OSORIO /REUTERS

Authorities in Kingston are preparing for a threatened truck convoy of its own expected to threaten traffic Saturday afternoon.

“We acknowledge that individuals are entitled to a right to peaceful demonstration,” said police Chief Antje Mcneely in a statement.

“Kingston Police’s priority will be to minimize the impact on motorists to ensure public safety, with the goal of restoring regular traffic flow in the safest manner possible.”

The Windsor bridge blockade has stemmed the flow of hundreds of millions of dollars in cross border

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-With files from Andrew Duffy, Jacquie Miller, Matthew Lapierre and The Canadian Press



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THIS WEEK IN FIFERS

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